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Transport

487 *Tracks.* Altogether we are unable to claim any high degree of engineering skill or architectural taste for the Orokaiva; but in magisterial estimation the excellence of the tracks makes ample amends. These are said to compare favourably with those of any other Division, though it is doubtful whether the Orokaiva of former days bestowed any exceptional care upon them; for if left to themselves they seem, with their naked legs and hardy feet, equally indifferent to the mud of swamps or the obstacles of the road.

But nowadays in some parts and at some times—particularly before the periodical visit of the magistrate—the track may be swept and garnished and guiltless of the minutest weed; for at the behest of the village constable the men turn out with trade knives and spade-like scrapers of tin, to nick, shave, and almost polish the surface of the road.

491 *Bridges.* Formerly, I am told, stretches of swamp were spanned by single logs supported on cross-trestles. The modern type of this bridge has an adzed surface to make walking safer, and is certainly preferable to the other style (viz. a raised gangway with clumsily laid cross-pieces) until, as is so often the case, the log is found to be slippery and aslant. Small creeks are crossed by single tree-trunks, over which the native, a fearless balancer, walks without misgiving, despite the queer and disconcerting vibrations set up by his footsteps on a long log.

491 One is told of the former existence of cane-bridges swung
177 from the branches of tall trees overhanging the banks of a river. Nowadays these cobweb bridges are replaced by more workmanlike, though still somewhat precarious, fabrics, in which the cane is reinforced by steel wire. Such improvements are necessitated only by the presence of the white man, whose feet are delicately encased in boots, and who, apart from his fastidiousness regarding the mire, seems by comparison deficient in the nerve which altitude and balancing demand.

491 The rivers in their upper reaches are commonly forded. A party bound for a dance, fully armed and decorated, will

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remove their bark-cloth bands, take to the water and swim over, holding spear, shield, string bag, and bark-cloth band above their heads. A man may take a short length of light wood for a lifebuoy and, launching himself into the rapids of the Kumusi, will disappear and reappear many times, in a way which may actually alarm the spectator, until he emerges on the opposite bank some hundreds of yards down stream.

Rafts. Along the upper reaches of the rivers canoes are seldom seen. A primitive raft (*enga*) is constructed of half a dozen logs with two cross-pieces. Underneath are placed one or two much larger logs, which, though quite unattached, remain in position and buoy the raft upwards. An even cruder makeshift is an *enga* of banana stalks.

This primitive device, the raft, continues to hold its place with the canoe. Although essentially temporary it is strongly made. There is a tale of a crocodile-man who in his human guise persuaded two youths to build a raft, instructing them particularly to use grass in the building of it. He then volunteered to swim underneath in order to buoy up the raft like one of the detached logs. But he had betrayed himself by a smile which revealed the long pointed teeth of a crocodile, and the boys, unknown to him, used cane and strong creeper in binding the logs together. Then follows the sequel in which the swimmer, transmogrified into a crocodile, heaves and lashes his tail to no effect, thus pointing to the necessity of making a strong job even of an *enga*. But, however well constructed, the raft remains an unstable craft, and in the main a temporary one. Being clumsy and unmanageable, it may be carried far down stream in transit, and it is easier to make another than to haul it back.

Canoes. The canoe (*ma*) is a hollowed log with a platform and an outrigger. The work of obtaining a suitable log and the rough hewing of it will call for the assistance of a man's fellow villagers, for which he makes them no reward except that of feeding them. After the initial stages he works leisurely at it himself; he gives a neat finish to the hewing with his adze (and sometimes still the old stone adze is preferred for canoe work); he fits the platform and outrigger;